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For Immediate Release

## **Hundreds of Yellowstone Bison “Sent Home” Today, State and Federal Agencies Working Together in Major Effort**

Hundreds of errant bison were successfully herded back into Yellowstone National Park earlier today, the result of the most aggressive herding operation this year. Montana Department of Livestock officials said the massive effort represented a “positive and very welcome breakthrough” in the state’s relations with the National Park Service.

Employees of the Department of Livestock worked side by side with personnel from Yellowstone Park, the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies to conduct the operation, which drove bison from outside the Park’s western boundary to the Cougar Meadows area, roughly seven miles inside the Park.

“We are very grateful to Yellowstone National Park for the significantly improved cooperation we received in our efforts today,” said Bill Hedstrom, Chairman of the Montana Board of Livestock. “At this point, it’s a real positive and very welcome breakthrough for us to have the ability to herd these bison further into the Park. One of the serious problems we’ve had lately is that these operations have been required to stop at the Park boundary. Today’s operation has a much better chance of making a lasting improvement in the disease-risk situation down there,” Hedstrom said.

Numerous herding operations have been conducted over the past few weeks, Hedstrom explained, but the bison have consistently and quickly returned to private and public rangelands outside the Park, northwest of West Yellowstone, often to areas where the state-federal interagency bison management agreement allows cattle grazing to have begun by this time of year.

“We’re long overdue to have bison out of these areas, grazing inside the Park instead, and we’re hopeful that the successful operation today will be the beginning of the end of herding efforts this year,” Hedstrom said.

More herding may occur tomorrow, he said, depending on developments later today and tonight. “As you can imagine, our employees have been keeping a very close eye on the situation there, and will continue to do so.”

Hedstrom emphasized that everyone involved in today's operation "deserves the thanks of all Montanans. We want to thank everyone who participated, people from the federal, state and local agencies. It's hard work, and they all did an outstanding job. Some of these folks in our department have been working nearly around the clock planning, preparing and conducting these operations, and we want them all to know how grateful we are."

He added that the department also is making preparations "in case the herding operations this week fail to produce the lasting success that is essential. We will be ready to begin removing bison from Montana lands if necessary," he said. "For the moment, though, we're breathing a sigh of relief and praying for continued good fortune as our ongoing brucellosis investigation continues."